

The Honorable Madeline Hughes Haikala
United States District Court
Hugo L. Black U.S. Courthouse
1729 Fifth Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203

Dear Judge Haikala:

My name is Danica Pruett. I am the parent of 14 year old student Amanda Pruett and of 12 year old sons Samuel and Andrew Pruett.

This letter will address an issue in which you will be making a final decision soon. I hope you understand how important this request is for my kids, and see the fact that my family evaluated the information provided. We also placed a great effort on finding information not provided (with the help of several parents in the community). We strived to make a fair request so no one else in the Huntsville City school system would be affected. This request is in no way against the goals of the proposed consent order either.

The proposed consent order was made available to us through the Huntsville City School system on January 26th. It was not until later that someone addressed the grandfather clause that previously was a certainty for all of us. Since the proposed consent order did not make mention of it one way or another, initially we all thought, in good faith, that nothing had changed related to the plans of grandfathering the kids in their actual schools and feeder patterns.

Public forums were made available soon after. I was able to go to one of them and addressed my main concerns. I listened to the others and their concerns too. More work was done to make certain that our request would not affect others.

I live at 806 Mullins Hill Dr. Our community has a small amount of kids that will be transferred from Grissom High School (GHS) to Huntsville High School (HHS) and vice versa. The proposed consent order did not address the exact numbers, but after checking with neighbor families of the area affected, going street by street, checking directories and information from friends we found that we have around 11-13 kids that will be transferred from GHS to HHS in 9th grade. An approximate number would also transfer from HHS to GHS. Basically, it is a close to zero net flow which is not making a major change by opening spaces in either school but it will dramatically affect the life of several young children.

My husband and I moved to this area because of the schools that were assigned to it. We have made many sacrifices to have our children stable in one area. He is an engineer and I am a physician. He travels quite a bit at times and I work about 60+ hours a week. I decided many years ago to travel as a physician (locum tenens position) so I could be able to adjust my

schedule to my convenience and have the time available for my kids. I made this choice because I did not want my kids to have the same challenging experience I had as a child. I did not like changing schools multiple times. I could have had many other opportunities if I would have stayed in the same school. I had to climb a steep ladder to be where I am now. I know by first hand experience how hard is to be the new kid again and again and I do not want that for my kids.

Amanda is in 9th grade at Grissom High School. She is a very good student with aspirations to complete a degree in dentistry or in medicine after high school. She has already gone through a couple of transitions in the past and had to re-adjust to a new group of peers. That is because she started in Jones Valley elementary, but at that time we were zoned to continue in Whitesburg P-8 for her middle school. Most of her peers from Jones Valley went to Huntsville Middle school 5 years ago. It took a whole year for her to get used to a new group. Most kids in Whitesburg P8 know each other since pre-K so she was part of the "new kids". She still had a couple of friends from Jones Valley who transitioned with her to the middle school. But upon her departure to high school those friends left to Huntsville High while she was zoned to Grissom. The few additional friends she made in middle school are at Grissom now. They are not in the same classrooms but it still helped her a little bit with the new readjustment while she started making a new study group. It was tough at the beginning but finally again in her second half of the academic year she is back on track. She has cried a few times upon the knowledge that she is not going to be grandfathered to her actual high school and now she has been sad knowing she will probably be departing from her friends. She dreads changing and starting over with this challenges again. Only 11-13 kids will be leaving Grissom High school to Huntsville High school with the implantation of the proposed consent order. She knows only one girl in that group whose parents have decided to transfer her daughter to a private school next year due to the rezoning plans. She fears being the "new kid" at Huntsville High school at a time that she is going to be taking all honor classes again but now with some AP classes. She will not have a study group from the beginning and it'll be time consuming to find those peers with whom they have similar interests in a year where time is not a luxury with all her advanced classes. That is why freshman academies were created. She won't have that equal opportunity to adjust in the "new school" as the others did.

She already participates in math team and in HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) at GHS. She also participates in extracurricular activities like baton twirling (on weekends) with which she has competed at national level bringing back to Huntsville and Alabama gold medals for the past 5 years. She has finally managed to balance nicely between her academic responsibilities and her extracurricular activities since she found a steady group at Grissom with whom she studies and shares her time.

Andrew and Samuel are both in 6th grade and taking 7th grade honors math. Sixth grade has been a tough one for them too. We tried to make it easier by allowing them to go to the Whitesburg Math team when they were in 5th grade at Jones Valley. That helped a lot, mainly for my son Andrew, and we were very appreciative of the Math sponsor for allowing such transition. When classes began there were still other challenges to overcome. Hormones are

wild at this age and students change at different paces. They have already survived part of this year but not without hiccups. They also started forming a new group of friends, not only in 6th grade but now in 7th grade too. They were putting a lot of effort on doing their best to be part of the Green Power team next year and looking forward to continue it at Grissom. They met Grissom teachers during math competitions and during the summer robotic camp that they have. Those same teachers have already provided information around the interests that they are developing in the area of engineering. Samuel wants to be an aerospace engineer same as his grandfather. Andrew discovered an interest on chemical engineering during the robotic camp with a chemistry Grissom teacher. They both like music too. Andrew plays the clarinet and was working hard to get to play the bass clarinet next year and be part of jazz band. Samuel has done very well too and has been chosen a few times to help others in his trumpet section. He also wants to participate in jazz band next year. I have asked around and I was told that there is no jazz band in Huntsville Middle School. Now they are somewhat restless. A new change, new peers, frustration that their efforts were not worth much by not being able to be part of the Green Power team, or be part of a jazz band or even learn how to play the bass clarinet next year. I have already seen their grades affected a bit. It is hard at this age to explain the why's or how's of the things that happen.

The truth is that I still don't understand the why's very much. I say that because the transfers like Butler High school to other high schools do make sense. The students have to transfer if a school is closing. The difference is that they go with a group of friends of about 100-200 or more together. The difference is that GHS and HHS are not closing. The difference is that there is a little amount of students moving to another school (HHS) while an approximate same amount moves from that same other school to ours (GHS), making no significant change in enrollment numbers, diversity, or the availability of Majority-to-Minority transfer slots by moving or not.

The amount of students in our area that is affected make less than 0.01% of the students of their school. Grandfathering the students in our area then should not be a problem. It is the right thing to do to give them stability, to do them justice, to not disrupt their educational experience, to not make them feel like their efforts are not valued or even feel like they've been punished.

I am respectfully requesting that you allow the grandfathering clause for the rising 7th-12th graders. The numbers are very low and they will phase out in the upcoming years. I am asking you to look after the best interest of our kids as much as everyone is looking for the best interest of our school system.

Thank you very much for your anticipated attention to this matter,



Danica Q. Pruett M.D.